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**Impact of Perceived parenting on the Academic overload of the Adolescents of Kolkata  
Metropolis**

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**Abstract**

The Study explores the relationship between Perceived Parenting and Academic Overload of the teenagers of Kolkata Metropolis. A group of 302 adolescents from Kolkata (180 boys and 152girls) aged 14-18 years were selected through incidental purposive sampling. The tools used were a standerdized test of Perceived Parenting and an Academic Overload Questionnaire developed by the researchers. Findings show prevalence of positive parenting . Academic Overload was found to be within average level. There was no significant difference in relation to gender in the level of Academic Overload and Perceived Parenting. Both were found to have an inverse relationship .

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Key words : Perceived Parenting ; Academic Overload ; teenagers; Kolkata; India.

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**1. Introduction**

Since time immemorial youth has always been a warehouse of energy, enthusiasm with an inbuilt desire for action burning within. This inbuilt fire for action can burn the very essence of living community if not channelized in the proper direction. These aspirations have always existed and are still the hallmark of the young. Changes in the society and in their immediate environment have created various problems in the growth and development of the young people. To name some present changes include competitive examinations, reduction of free time, interpersonal relationship skills and low self training skills are said to cause anxiety and stress. (Yadav & Iqbal, 2009). Their low tolerance and inappropriate management of stress have made the health issues more varied and serious. The trend is expected to become more complex.

The adolescent in the current scenario is revealed by increasing depression, suicidal attempts, drug use, indicating clearly the challenges faced by them. Information overload, mixed messages from media, press, teachers, family and society at large add to the confusing scenario of the assimilating young mind, coping and countering environmental stress. (Yadav & Iqbal, 2009).

The very seeds of stress, insecurity and frustration are sown in the early childhood days by the parents themselves. It is the training of the child in his early days of childhood that prepares the ground for his happiness or unhappiness. During childhood the roles of the family already established helps to maintain a sense of equilibrium. (Santrock, 1992). It is during adolescence that they start looking for a different kind of support from their family, which may turn out to be a stressful time for the family too, until a new system of equilibrium is established. (Santrock, 1992).

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Thus environment plays a very important role in the development of personality of the child. When the environment is very favourable and rich it creates a favourable impression in the person's developmental process. If this environment is dull or insipid, then the behaviour of the person is likely to be shaped in an unhealthy way. (Arnold, 1960). Home being the first socializing agent, plays an important role in moulding the personality of the children in early infancy, as it is through the family that they learn the patterns of behaviour prevalent in the community. Certain early experiences leave indelible impression on the minds of the children that continue to influence to a great extent their behaviour throughout life. (Arnold, 1960). It therefore goes without saying that parental temperament, behaviour, character and mutual relation influence child's personality development. (Arnold, 1960).

The causes of modern day problems lie to a great extent within the style of bringing up the adolescent in the childhood days. It is the parents who actually decide on the end product. That is if he/she will turn out to be a disgruntled youth or a person capable of handling success and failure with equal ease, without taking help of drug or suicide.

Adolescence is a time when ordinary levels of stress are heightened by physical, psychological, emotional and social changes. Urban society alienates the adolescent from their new identity by not allowing them the rights and responsibilities of adulthood. Our achievement oriented highly competitive society puts pressure on the teens to succeed, often forcing them to set unrealistically high personal expectations. There is increased pressure in the schools, where success is narrowly defined and difficult to achieve. (Ameen, 2005).

Some researchers argue that economic and political institutions have penetrated the family unit, reducing it to a consumer unit no longer able to function as a support system and supply family members with a sense of stability and rootedness. Awareness of the existing state of the world, threatened by sophisticated method of destruction can contribute to the adolescent's helplessness and hopelessness. Faced with these feelings and turning to escapist measures such as drugs, withdrawal and untimely suicide, (Ameen, 2005) explains the rising suicidal rate especially in India, where 23% of the adolescents are between the age range 10 – 19 years. (Bott & Jejeebhoy, 2000).

The broad objective of the study was to examine the parent –child relationship that contributes to the social support system of an adolescent which eventually affects his/her mental health. The study specifically explored the relationship between Perceived Parenting and Academic Overload of the teenagers of Kolkata Metropolis.

Academic Overload is defined by the excessive internal and external demands regarding academic performance which creates disequilibrium in the mental life of the child. (Pffifer, 2001). It may also be viewed as the "stress or feeling of burden" resulting from various associated aspects of academic achievement. (Mitra & Sengupta, 2007).

Parenting Styles on the other hand are collections of parental attitudes, practices and non-verbal expressions that characterize the nature of parent-child interactions. (Blasgow et al, 1997). The parenting style that has been observed here is based on how the child perceives his/her parenting. In other words it is the child's perception of his parental attitude towards him. (Bharadwaj, 1998; Mitra & Sengupta, 2007).

## 2. Participants

The participants were 302 Indian urban adolescents (Girls 150, and boys 152) of junior secondary and senior secondary English medium school students collected through incidental purposive sampling technique. They comprised of multi-lingual and multi-religious children, having mother tongue as Bengali and Hindi. The schools were selected according to their ranks in the board exams, and those that allowed the researchers to collect data. The mean age of the participants was 16, ranging from 14-18 year olds. The particular group was selected for the study as it was assumed that children studying in standard schools and average to good schools would actually be prone to Academic Overload, due to its location in one of India's leading metropolitan city. Not only this it was also assumed that the problem is basically an urban social problem, it was expected that the adolescents studying here was more or less of high competence level as they were coming from parents of varied educational and occupational backgrounds, where the minimum level of educational qualification of the both the parents was found to be university graduate. The occupational category of parents ranged from IT professionals, doctors, scientists, teachers, bank employees to businessmen etc. It was therefore expected that the expectation level of the parents, teachers and peers of these adolescents to perform well would be high. This would ultimately affect their Perceived Parenting in this examination dominated environment. At the same time this age group faced the board exams of class X and XII, together with the entrance examinations of various esteemed colleges and universities in the country. It was felt the pressure to excel and to stand out for future financial gains was mainly an urban phenomenon than a rural one.

### 3. Instruments

Personal data Sheet was used to collect personal and familial information consisting of the subjects age, gender, class, stream, school, address, family constitution, income, occupation and educational qualification of both the parents.

The following measures of the variables have been used in the study.

Perceived Parenting Scale includes eight models of parenting as designed by Bharadwaj, Sharma & Garg (1998). The scale represents a dichotomy in each parenting model. It can be studied as the role of mothering and fathering separately as well as parenting as a whole, except marital conflict vs marital adjustment which can only be associated with the study of adequate or inadequate parenting as a whole. The final form of the scale has 40 items related to 8 different models of parenting and are spread in a meaningful manner. These items are placed in a block at number 36-40. The Few items are stated negatively to check the habitual disposition of the responses. The scale has very high internal consistency. The reliability was done with the help of test-retest method and was found to be 0.72 for the total perceived parenting style measure. While reliability and validity coefficients was found to be ranging from 0.54 to 0.79 and 0.36 to 0.62 respectively across the eight models of parenting studied.. Scoring was done quantitatively on a five point scale as suggested by Likert. Each item was scored as 1,2,3,4 and 5, while some items were of reverse order. The total raw score was converted to Z score with the help of the table provided in the manual. The total Z score for both the parents contributed to the total parenting score of the particular parenting. The interpretation was done with the help of sten scores. ( Catell et al , 1970).

Academic Overload Questionnaire was constructed by Mitra & Sengupta (2005) in order to measure the academic burden beyond the individual's means to satisfy. This feeling of burden surfaces due to curricular, co-curricular activities, school homework, and regular class tests coupled with deadlines that the adolescents have to comply with, making their daily schedule air tight, without any time for leisure of their choice. After using test-retest reliability and validity techniques (inert-item consistency) the final questionnaire stood out to have 33 items, having five dimensions that measures overload due to personal, familial, teacher, peer group and societal aspects. The final test was then administered to 659 adolescent boys and girls of 14-18 years from which the following norm was derived, with a mean of 100.6 and sd of 17.13. The scoring of test items were done on the basis of choice on any one of the five alternatives provided and each choice was scored S 1,2,3,4 and 5. The norm of the questionnaire stood to be ' over 118 as high Academically Overloaded; 83-118 as average Academically overloaded and below 83 as low Academically Overloaded .

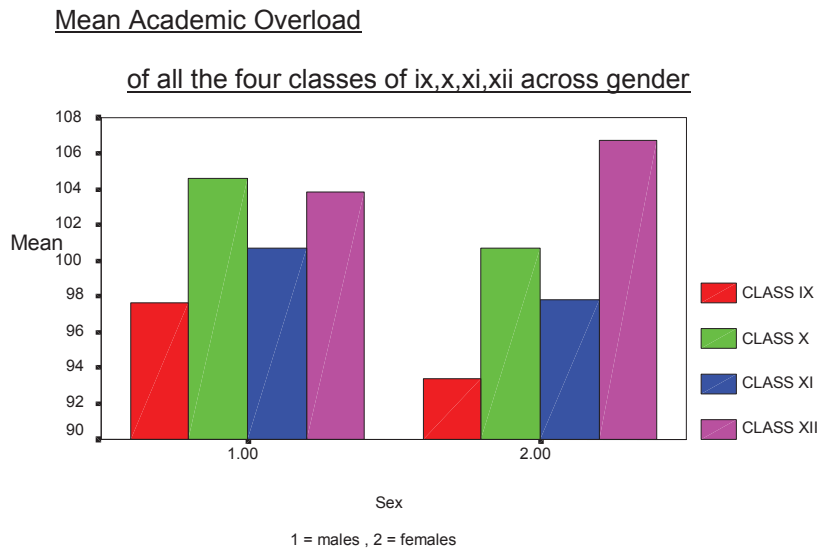
### 4. Results

Table No :1 Mean and Standard Deviation of the variables across class

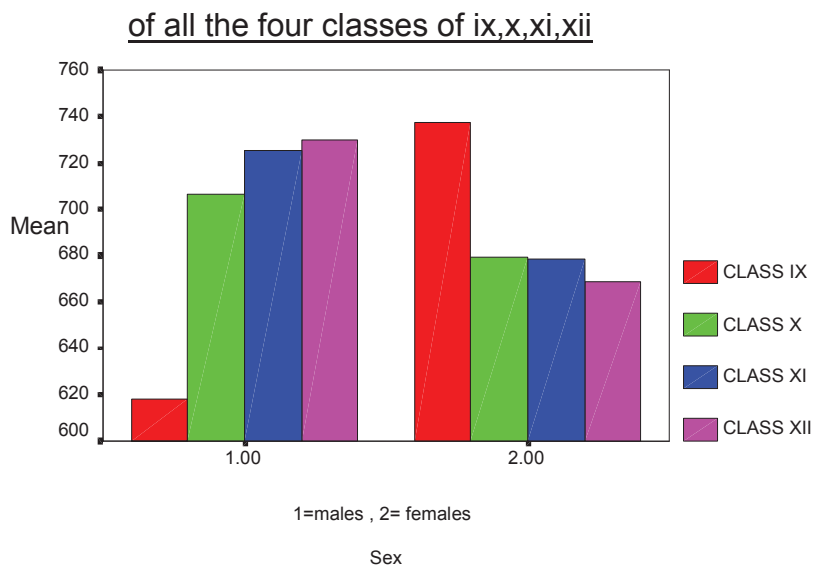
Class	Academic Overload		Perceived Parenting	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
IX	$\mu = 97.67$ $\sigma = 20.29$	$\mu = 93.51$ $\sigma = 15.46$	$\mu = 617.9$ $\sigma = 155.27$	$\mu = 737.52$ $\sigma = 109.55$
X	$\mu = 104.94$ $\sigma = 19.55$	$\mu = 100.72$ $\sigma = 14.03$	$\mu = 706.15$ $\sigma = 139.66$	$\mu = 678.94$ $\sigma = 156.77$
XI	$\mu = 100.65$ $\sigma = 16.3$	$\mu = 97.77$ $\sigma = 16.27$	$\mu = 725.63$ $\sigma = 122.9$	$\mu = 687.85$ $\sigma = 161.39$
XII	$\mu = 103.87$ $\sigma = 16.25$	$\mu = 106.69$ $\sigma = 13.9$	$\mu = 729.70$ $\sigma = 116.16$	$\mu = 668.32$ $\sigma = 178.99$

- Academic Overload experienced by the adolescents is highest in grade X for the males and for the females it is the highest in grade XII.
- Adolescent boys show a high Perceived parenting in grade XII, where as the girls have a high Perceived parenting in grade IX.

**FIG NO : 1**



Mean Perceived Parenting of males & females



**FIG NO :2**

Table No : 2

Significance of Difference between the Means gender wise and grade wise

Class	IX		X		XI		XII	
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Academic Overload	97.8	93.4	104.6	100.7	100.8	97.8	103.1	106.7
P Value	0.290		0.345		0.411		0.314	

Perceived Parenting	633	738	715	679	733	688	731	697
P Value	0.001		0.299		0.155		0.311	

Table No : 3

	<u>Correlation Table</u>
(PP)	(AO)
	-0.013
	P=0.819

## 5. Discussion

The statistical analysis of the data collected have shown that the level of academic Overload of the participants is within average limit, which has led to the rejection of the assumption that the mean Academic Overload scores of school children in the age 14-18 years would be above average. As the present day teenagers are academically overloaded with the deadlines that they have to meet regarding their assessments, tutorial classes and other out of school activities that they are engaged with. It seems that they are more than happy to get themselves involved in these various activities, as they use it as an outlet for the vent up emotions in a much more useful and a creative way. The adolescents of today are much more successful in handling their stressful situations; they are more confident and sure of themselves. (Mitra, 2007).

Thinking positively and avoiding negative thoughts is a good strategy when trying to handle stress in any circumstance. (Aronowitz, 2005). The adolescents studied in the sample probably were more optimistic in nature, that helped them to process information efficiently, enhancing their self-esteem. It gave them a sense of controlling their environment. (Santrock, 2007), just like the way the importance of self-efficacy in coping was described by Albert Bandura.( 1997, 2001, 2004).

Another important aspect that might have helped them, is the support of the parents they received , as is evident from the high level of Perceived Parenting. This is so because support from others is an important aspect of being able to cope with stress. (Wang & Yeh, 2005). Close and positive attachments to others like family members, friends, and mentor consistently help as buffer to stress in adolescent lives. (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995).

Moreover Academic Overload scores of school children in the selected sample are within average range probably because the schools that have been considered for the study come under average to good schools, who are capable of instilling test taking skills, time management skills and good study techniques in their students. Moreover in an atmosphere of continuous and constant assessments and evaluations, they are more than used to taking tests, being a part and parcel of their everyday life, as a result of which they are more or less prepared with their regular studies leading to an insignificant level

of Academic Overload. This finding is completely in agreement with a few previous studies. (Balakrishna & Narasimha,1998 ; Ainslie et al, 1996)

Findings of the present study also reveal positive parenting with its level being above average of the entire sample under study. Parents in the present study seem to be fairly open in their parenting style resulting in breaking the ice between their teenage son or daughter and be one of the most trusted companions. Such an attitude from the parental side, helped their teenager to perceive their parenting as positive. Although adolescence is a time for more peer attachment than parental, it is also a fact that forms and quality of relationships that develop with friends is an extension of the quality of relationships that has developed within the family. The parents of the participants under study are well educated and reside in a metropolitan city making it possible for such a trend. The people dwelling in a metropolitan city are exposed to a number of varied circumstances, the experiences of which are also varied. A city parent therefore exercises control to the extent to which it is needed, extending support, while allowing freedom at the same time, by not setting rigid standards unnecessarily. Such an atmosphere is bound to bring about high level of understanding and comfort between the two resulting in an above average Perceived Parenting score. (Mitra, 2007).

The results obtained from fig 2 Show Perceived Parenting scores are highest in class xi and xii i.e. during mid or late adolescence, and lowest in early to mid adolescence i.e. grade ix and x. This could be as cognitive

models argue that the form and quality of relationship that develop with peers is an extension of the form and quality of relationship that has developed within the family. ( Bowlby, 1969, 1997; Offer et al , 1981 ; Sullivan, 1953). At the same time we are aware that adolescence is seen as a phase where parental relationship becomes salient or even inhibitory as the individuals orient themselves to the world of their friends and peers. (Blos, 1979; Coleman, 1961; Douval & Adelson, 1966). It is also a time when the quality of peer attachments is just as important as quality parental relations to the adolescent psychological health and adjustment. (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987; Batgor & Leadbetter, 1994; Goosens et al, 1998). During early to mid adolescence they become peer focused with friends becoming preferable disclosure targets. (Guerrero & Afifi, 1995), but parents remain an important source of emotional support. It rather serves as a launching pad for adolescence to explore and develop a sense of self. (Sartor & Youniss, 2002). This attachment with parents continues through late adolescence, as they re-define themselves within the family context. (O’Koon, 1997). Probably these are the reasons behind the increased level of Perceived Parenting from mid to late adolescence.

The fig 1 gives a vivid picture of the amount of Academic Overload experienced by the adolescents. The xth and the xiith graders experienced the maximum Academic Overload as these were the final classes, after completion of which they would be facing the board examinations. It is at the same time they need to prepare themselves for the entrance test to various professional, technical, vocational and science colleges as well. It is therefore but natural that they feel overloaded, than their juniors i.e. ixth and xith graders. Students are said to experience stress, when they are detached from this environment, allowing them to enjoy leisure time at a more satisfactory level. While they get stressed due to pressure as a result of competition and meeting deadlines. (Misra et al, 2000).

The study also reveals the absence of gender bias on the mean scores of Academic Overload and Perceived parenting. The reason behind this could be the social setting in the metropolitan cities of India, which is based more on equilibrium, establishing equal dominance of girls and boys in many spheres during the early years of life. In an urban Indian setting a girl child in general gets equal opportunity regarding studies, exposure to games etc with an adolescent boy.

The youth of India chase performance targets set by narrow definitions of success in academics or in their personal lives. As a result they start viewing success as “all “or ‘none’ leading them to be demoralized and Academically Overloaded. The present study contradicts the above notion by showing that they face more or less the same level of Academic Overload. Living in a metropolitan city has helped the parents of the participants to provide the same facility and social setting to their child irrespective of gender.

The study also shows that parenting styles practiced in the cities do not differ with with respect to the gender of the child. Discrimination with respect to gender did not prevail in a urban cosmopolitan setting. the findings of the present study are in accordance with the findings of Misra, 2002 where no statistically significant difference was found in gender for Academic Overload. Parenting as perceived by the participants of the study has revealed an inverse relationship with the Academic overload experienced by them. This means that positive parenting helps to lower the level of Academic overload of the adolescents. Positive parenting or parental warmth helps to enhance the individual’s self-concept. (Parish & Mc Clusky, 1992; Gecas, 1971, 1972; Growe, 1980; Graybill, 1978; Hoelter & Harper, 1987; Holmbeck & Hill, 1986) which enhances one’s ability to cope effectively with stress. (Abouserie, 1994). It is said that vulnerable self-esteem precedes the onset of stress. The experience of stress further lowers self-esteem. (Bagley & Young, 1990).

Highly approving parents foster emotionally mature adolescents. (Sharma & Vaid, 2005). Moreover the parents of the samples in the study had some social position or the other. The higher the social position of the parents, the more the adolescent showed characteristics of self-direction. (Gerris et al, 1997) and ultimately contributed in lowering the level of Academic Overload incurred by the adolescents. Good parenting leading to a strong self-esteem helps the adolescent of today to be more organized, in which they have learnt the art of time management, to keep up with their out of school activities together with their studies, that do not leave them overloaded, infact they enjoy what they do.

## 6. Implication

The study has thrown light into the marks of positive parenting on the self-image of the adolescent. It stresses on the individuation process that involves a delicate balance between freedom from and relatedness to parents. (Youniss & Smoller, 1985). It has emphasized a strong and healthy relation between the parent and the adolescent child, where the communication is and should be a two-way process. The study also has strong implications on the media reports of school students committing suicide. The results of the study show that the cause



for worry is still insignificant on the general population of India. One need not panic as it has not gone too far, but on the other hand we can act fast to undertake measures for its prevention in ways of effective parenting techniques and stress management.

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